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# Florida Democrats get tough on Cuba

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The top House Democrat on foreign policy, in response to reports of recent Cuban combat deaths in Nicaragua, has called for an "urgent review" of Cuba's role in Central America and a U.S. response to those findings.

"Any marked change in the level and nature of Cuban military activity necessitates a total review of U.S. policy in the region and a thorough

and detailed examination of all possible options which the United States might want to take," said Rep. Dante Fascell, the Florida Democrat who heads the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Mr. Fascell's comments came after Secretary of State George Shultz said last Friday that there was "incontrovertible evidence" that some of the 2,500 Cuban military advisers in Nicaragua had become increasingly involved in combat against U.S.-backed rebels.

Mr. Shultz also said the United States might take "further steps" to aid the anti-communist forces.

A few days earlier, the rebels, who oppose Nicaragua's Marxist Sandinista government, had used a surface-to-air missile to shoot down a Soviet-built Nicaraguan helicopter. Two Cuban pilots were said to be among the 14 killed. Nicaragua has denied that Cuban pilots were killed in the incident.

The Reagan administration has been unsuccessful in getting Congress to approve military aid for the rebel units. However, a compromise earlier this year, in which Mr. Fascell was instrumental, allowed \$27 million in "humanitarian" assistance.

"While I am not now prepared to recommend any specific actions on

the basis of the information available so far, it is clear that a comprehensive review of what [Cuban leader Fidel] Castro is up to is urgently required," Mr. Fascell said in a statement released by the committee.

As a result, he has ordered an "urgent review" by the committee of Cuban activities around the world, primarily in Nicaragua and Angola, followed by an evaluation of U.S. policy options.

As part of that review, the committee is to have a full intelligence briefing this week.

While Mr. Fascell made no mention in a prepared statement of reconsidering military options, Mr. Shultz suggested last week that the administration might renew a request for military funds in light of the latest combat developments.

Elliott Abrams, assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs, was first to report the Cuban combat deaths in a report to one of Mr. Fascell's subcommittees last week.

At that time Mr. Abrams said the U.S.-backed rebels could now clearly make use of missiles to knock down the helicopters that the Nicaraguans are using with more frequency against them. But he made no specific proposal for U.S. military aid.

Rep. Claude Pepper, Florida Democrat and chairman of the Rules Committee, released last week a copy of a letter, signed by most members of the Florida congressional delegation, that he sent recently to President Reagan, calling for the United States to toughen its anti-Cuba policies.

"Castro is currently engaged in numerous subversive and terrorist activities detrimental to U.S. interests," the letter says.

Mr. Pepper criticized Mr. Castro for stirring up communist terrorism in Central America, for keeping roughly 25,000 troops in Angola to support that Marxist government and for using international drug

trade to raise hard currency for his country.

"It is an evil regime," Mr. Pepper's letter says of Cuba.

Mr. Pepper and Mr. Fascell, both viewed as foreign policy centrists, represent greater Miami, which has the nation's highest concentration of Cuban-Americans. Mr. Pepper said last week that Florida's Cuban population, its location 90 miles from Cuba, and its nearness to Central America have made his constituents alarmed by Mr. Castro's subversive efforts.

The letter calls on Mr. Reagan, among other things, to tighten "loopholes" in the longstanding U.S. trade embargo against Cuba and to consider satellite television broadcasts into Cuba — something similar to the U.S. effort with Radio Marti.

The Pepper letter, which says there are clear links between the Cuban government and international terrorism, also accuses Mr. Castro of trying to topple the international financial system because he has urged nations with large foreign debts to refuse to pay them.